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Please send comments or subscription requests to news@swimmingcoach.org

Hard Work

By John Leonard

We believe hard work is its own reward. We believe that everyone benefits from hard work. It teaches all of us that nothing is given to us, it has to be earned. It teaches us that life is not fair as sometimes those who work the hardest are not rewarded the most. But without hard work, there is a reduced likelihood of reward. Hard work “feels good”. It makes us feel valuable, capable, and self-sufficient. One of the few things we can control in the world is the level of our own effort. When we work harder than we thought was possible for us, we open new doors of possibility in our lives.

We believe that children need to be TAUGHT to work hard. Role modeling from parents, from coaches, and from teammates is the best teacher. Young people learn when they say “I’m tired” from sitting around all day in front of a computer, that they have to learn that SPENDING ENERGY in hard work, BRINGS MORE energy to your body and mind. Want to feel great? Get up and work hard. Sitting around does, in fact, make you tired. Children need to be taught that. It is counter-intuitive.

We believe that Resiliency is THE great trait to learn from swimming. Everyone gets knocked down in life. The critical thing is to learn to bounce back up immediately and re-double your efforts. When I speak to parents, they always tell me that they attained the position they have in life by overcoming all the obstacles that fate placed in their way. Then, they often say “I don’t want my kids to have to go through that.”

This is lunacy! You don’t want your children to learn from the same pieces in life that made you successful?

Children need hard challenges. They need to “fail” as often as they succeed. They need to learn to quickly and effectively bounce back up and get back to work. Parents protecting their children in the extreme are called “Curling Parents”. (Because they remove the obstacles from the path of the child.) IT IS SO MUCH BETTER to prepare the child for the hard path, than try to clear the hard path FOR the child. Each time you do something for your child that they can do

for themselves you make your child WEAK. Show your confidence in them by allowing THEM to overcome the obstacles. Resiliency.

It's a Family Thing. Everyone in the family has a role in swimming.

The child does the work, the learning, the physical effort. The parents remind the child of their commitments made and of the life skills that will make them a success in life and in swimming. The Coach coaches. The friends support and cheer and encourage. The parent takes care of the “get the child there” logistics so critical to a child’s success and consistency. Everyone has a role. Play YOUR role and don’t interfere in other’s role.

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It's Not About Butterfly (or back, or breast, or free.....)

Guy Edson

Coach (giving instructions to a group of above average ability 13-14 year olds):
“The next set is nine 100’s of fly on 1:30, descending one through 3, 4 through 6, and 7 through 9. The purpose of this set is twofold: first, controlling your swims, and second, facing the challenge and beating it. We’re leaving on the next 60, get ready to go.”

Swimmer: “I suck at fly. It’s not my best event. Why do I even have to do this?”

Coach: “This is not about butterfly. It’s about your mind. It’s about mental toughness. It’s about learning how to deal with the very difficult. Swimming practice is not designed to be accommodating to what you like, it’s designed to be relevant to what you need, and at the top of the list of relevance is dealing with adversity and learning how to approach the seemingly impossible. This set is an unabashed challenge to your ability to tough it out. Get ready to go.”

However, the swimmer walks out of practice and later complains to her father who comes to the next practice and confronts the coach. “How does an impossible butterfly set help her breaststroke?” he demands.

What can happen? The coach can give the same answer to the father that he gave to the daughter and if the he buys into it, then we have a partnership – coach and

father: the coach presents the challenges and the dad provides the emotional support to the child.

If the father doesn't buy it, the child will lose an opportunity to challenge themselves, convince themselves "I can" rather than "I can't", and the coach will recognize an athlete who is not ready to step up and "take a chance" yet, which is the first step to long term success."

Is there anything more important in this coaching and swimming endeavor than learning to deal with adversity? Are you giving your coach the authority, the freedom, support, and the blessings to prescribe workouts which enable the swimmer to develop resiliency?